

Investigation of seepage issues at Howard Hanson Dam continues

Engineers actively investigating right abutment seepage issues at Howard Hanson Dam

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SEATTLE - Green River Valley residents have been watching and waiting since the announcement in January that Howard Hanson Dam had sustained damages following a pool of record and that the dam would have to operate at a diminished capacity.

The Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is evaluating two depressions on the right abutment at the dam, which provides flood risk reduction and water storage on the Green River. Working fervently to characterize the problem, so they can develop and implement an interim and long-term fix, Corps technical experts believe they are one step closer to final assessment.

To date, engineers have excavated the small and large depressions, have installed additional monitoring equipment and are conducting tests right now as the traditional summer conservation pool is stored at the dam.

“What we have found so far indicates that we may have isolated the reasons the two depressions formed, but we still need to evaluate the extent and effects of the seepage issues within the abutment, particularly in areas not protected by the existing grout curtain,” said Mark Ohlstrom, Chief of Engineering-Construction at Seattle District.

The Corps cautions that a long-term solution is still perhaps a few flood seasons away.

“What we have found so far hasn’t yet fully addressed the seepage issues within the abutment or increased our confidence in using the full flood storage capacity of the dam,” Ohlstrom said. “While the dam is not in immediate danger of failing, there is an increased risk to the downstream communities for higher flood levels until such time that the seepage issues with the right abutment have been resolved.”

In the interim, the Corps has been working closely with King County and the downstream cities of Auburn, Kent, Renton and Tukwila to prepare for flood season, should higher-than-standard flows be necessary from the dam.

Information on flood preparedness may be found at:

http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/prepare/FloodPlan_GRiverBasin.aspx

Updates regarding the dam may be found at: <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil>.